AN ANALYSIS OF OPERATIONAL ART: FIELD FORCE SYNCHRONIZATION IN VIETNAM FROM 1965-1967

A Monograph

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This monograph analyzes the synchronization of field force operations in Vietnam from 1965 to 1967. Although the terminology of operational art did not yet exist in doctrine, operations during the period of rapid force escalation demonstrate the success at which MACV and the field force headquarters and commanders coordinated and synchronized actions in time, space and purpose. This synchronized coordination did not occur without challenges. As Carl von Clausewitz described through his paradoxical trinity, the necessary link between a clearly defined political endstate and a military strategy was absent. To highlight this tension from the US field force perspective, this monograph is divided into four parts. First, the introduction includes a literature review of impactful Vietnam War works accumulated and analyzed over time. The second part describes the national narrative leading up to and during the rapid force escalation period. The second part further provides a contemporary definition of the term strategy in the proper doctrinal context to ensure a common understanding. The third part is a campaign analysis that depicts the field force commanders, the command and control situation, and in depth views of four specific major operations. Although the period of rapid force escalation in South Vietnam is historically considered a campaign, in reality this period was a series of major operations that did not achieve the political endstate. This monograph concludes with an assessment of the degree to which the failures to synchronize a total campaign was the key problem for the US in Vietnam.

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ABSTRACT

An Analysis Of Operational Art: Field Force Synchronization In Vietnam From 1965-1967, by Major Ryan G. Mayfield, 53 pages.

This monograph analyzes the synchronization of field force operations in Vietnam from 1965 to 1967. Although the terminology of operational art did not yet exist in doctrine, operations during the period of rapid force escalation demonstrate the success at which MACV and the field force headquarters and commanders coordinated and synchronized actions in time, space and purpose. This synchronized coordination did not occur without challenges. As Carl von Clausewitz described through his paradoxical trinity, the necessary link between a clearly defined political endstate and a military strategy was absent. To highlight this tension from the US field force perspective, this monograph is divided into four parts. First, the introduction includes a literature review of impactful Vietnam War works accumulated and analyzed over time. The second part describes the national narrative leading up to and during the rapid force escalation period. The second part further provides a contemporary definition of the term strategy in the proper doctrinal context to ensure a common understanding. The third part is a campaign analysis that depicts the field force commanders, the command and control situation, and in depth views of four specific major operations. Although the period of rapid force escalation in South Vietnam is historically considered a campaign, in reality this period was a series of major operations that did not achieve the political endstate. This monograph concludes with an assessment of the degree to which the failures to synchronize a total campaign was the key problem for the US in Vietnam.

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ACRONYMS

AAR	After Action Review
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
COSVN	Central Office of South Vietnam
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
FFV	Field Force, Vietnam
FWMF	Free World Military Forces
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LOE	Line of Effort
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
PACOM	Pacific Command
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PLAF	People's Liberation Armed Forces
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKFORV	Republic of Korean Forces, Vietnam
ULO	Unified Land Operations
VC	Viet Cong

FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

> "You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American colonel.
>
> The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant."
>
> -- Conversation in Hanoi, April 1975[1]

In South Vietnam between 1965 and 1967, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) achieved operational synchronization through the planned and executed actions of the I Field Force, Vietnam (FFV), II Field Force, Vietnam (FFV) and the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF). The successful coordination throughout MACV by the Joint and US corps level commanders and staffs reduced the interservice gap, improved command and control, and resulted in dominant tactical victories in each Corps tactical zone (CTZ). However, even with tactical success, a misunderstanding persisted between the US national government and the military regarding the effective application of military resources to achieve national policy objectives. An analysis of the operational synchronization by the field force headquarters within South Vietnam demonstrates that this tension and misunderstanding ultimately resulted in national policy failure during the period of rapid force escalation in South Vietnam.

The establishment of historical context through a political and doctrinal lens is critical for an analysis of the operational synchronization of the field forces and the III MAF. An overview of the combined records, accounts and published works detailing the reasons and events of the Vietnam War establishes this historical context. From personal and organizational accounts of planned and executed operations to past reflections of leaders to critical historical analysis, a comparison of perspectives over time shapes the context of the national as well as the military environments. The commanders' experiences as tactical level leaders in World War II and the Korean War shaped the corps level commanders in Vietnam. This contextual analysis illuminates

[1] Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982), 1.

the influence of these leaders as field force commanders on MACV's employment of operational synchronization in I FFV, II FFV and III MAF adjacent areas of operations. This analysis also explores the difference in operational perspective between the US Army and the US Marine Corps and exposes an interservice rivalry initially instigated in World War II.

An analysis of four major operations between 1965 and 1967 identifies and illustrates the key variables considered for successful tactical mission execution as well as achievement of operational objectives. Geography and the elements of terrain also prove significant in the examination of operational synchronization. The field forces in South Vietnam employed characteristics very similar to the elements of operational art that are utilized in today's current doctrine. The strategic implications from the persistent perceived risk of broadening the war to directly involve the regional nations of China and the Soviet Union affected the prosecution of the war from the field force perspective. The comparative analysis of operational synchronization between I FFV, II FFV and III MAF in Vietnam contributes to the joint understanding and application of operational art in today's contemporary environment.

Literature Review

The arguments about the Vietnam War are as pronounced today as they were during the war itself. From our current perspective, three distinct periods emerge which offer insight into the United States' understanding and perception of the escalation of force during the Vietnam War. The first period was made up of contemporary materials such as the individual unit histories, the oral interviews, after action reports (AARs) of the actual conduct of the war by the participants, and journalistic accounts of the war. With the exception of the material in *The Pentagon Papers*, most of the reports and documents were released for public use beginning in the mid-1980s. While this perspective does not offer the benefit of seasoned reflection, it does provide a foundation for contemporary analysis. The second period is characterized by the

memoirs of veterans and the first wave of analytical studies. This period encompasses the 20 years following the war and is shaped by military leaders along with historians and critics who were often critical of not simply the conduct of the force escalation, but of the overall role of the military and particularly of the US Army. Many of these contributions during this period presented a service based institutional argument as opposed to a critique of the conduct of warfare. Finally, the third period began in the late 1990s. Writings and contributions during this time often countered the more immediate and harshly critical reactions of authors during the second period. More perspective is gained over time and many authors posited that the initial reasons and rationale, not only for the broader role of the military as an institution, but also for the operational conduct of the war, was not as clear as initially perceived.

Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp's and General Westmoreland's joint *Report on the War in Vietnam, 1964-1968* is an authoritative military history of both the operations in South Vietnam along with the planned and executed events in the wider theater of Southeast Asia.[2] While this report offers a broad view of operations, since it is a primary source from both the Pacific Command (PACOM) and MACV Commanders themselves, it can not be disregarded in any critical research. Supporting this first hand account is both the MACV command history through 1967 along with specified unit histories of all of the field force headquarters.[3] When combined with the operation specific AARs for operations such as MASHER, ATTLEBORO, and JUNCTION CITY, a reader or student gains insight into the facts of each combat operation.[4]

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[2] Commander In Chief Pacific, Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Report on the War in Vietnam" (US Military History Institute, 1968).

[3] United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, Command History 1967, Volume 1, under "Sanitized," http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA955104 (accessed 11 April, 2013).

[4] Southeast Asia Report. *Operation Attleboro* (Pacific Air Forces, Hickam AFB, 1967); Southeast Asia Report. *Operation Masher & White Wing* (Pacific Air Forces, Hickam AFB, 1966).

However, the study of these reports alone must be viewed through the lens of authors at the time of publication. While recording and reporting facts, possible information perceived as negative by either the American public or a higher headquarters might be omitted for reasons of self-interest.

General Westmoreland's memoir, *A Soldier Reports* (1976), can be said to signal the beginning of the wave of memoir literature on the war. Although published in 1976 without a significant amount of separation from the war, General Westmoreland recounts his mindset and rationale for the decisions he made.[5] He intended to initiate a self-defense against any public and professional critics. As Westmoreland expected, several historical and military scholars criticized his actions while in command of MACV. Lewis Sorley and George Herring appeared as especially harsh critics in multiple critiques of US military action during the rapid escalation of force and especially critical of General Westmoreland.[6] In 1993, Herring edited an abridged version of *The Pentagon Papers*. *The Pentagon Papers* dramatically revealed a fragile national administration that did not effectively and potentially purposely steer the political nature of American involvement. Another theme during the second period after the Vietnam War concluded was the introduction of analysis by a younger generation of field grade officers. Then Majors Andrew Krepinevich, Jr. and David Petraeus explored the war in a doctrinal dissertation and in military publications questioning the role of the military institution in the Vietnam conflict.[7] He warned about mistakes made and how the lessons should be applied to future

[5] William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1976).

[6] Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); George C. Herring, *The Pentagon Papers, Abridged Edition* (1993); Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999).

[7] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*; David H. Petraeus, "Lessons of History and Lessons of Vietnam," *Parameters*, 16 (Autumn 1986), 43-53; David H. Petraeus, "*The American*

operations. Although this debate continued regarding the role of the military, the discussion did not address the actual conduct of the services once deployed to South Vietnam. As time passed, it became apparent there was a gap in research on how the war was actually fought at the operational level.

The third period began to bridge that gap with comprehensive accounts published by the Center for Military History. Graham Cosmas along with George MacGarrigle and John Carland published well-researched and detailed summaries of operations both at the tactical level and with connections to the national policy level.[8] However, none of the three authors explicitly assessed the success or failure of operational synchronization performed by the field force headquarters. Each of the periods of published writing regarding the Vietnam War provides a unique perspective that combines to adequately describe the national narrative of US policy in 1965 and the state of the military services as they began to develop, plan and execute a military strategy to achieve political objectives.

STRATEGIC SETTING

National Narrative

Students, scholars and professionals require recognition of the national political and cultural context to accurately understand the field force commanders and the complex situation into which their forces deployed beginning in 1965. President Truman and Eisenhower's foreign

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Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, October 1987).

[8] John M. Carland, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966* (Washington, D.C.: US Army Center of Military History, 2000); Graham A. Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967* (Washington, D.C.: US Army Center of Military History, 2006); and George L. MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967* (Washington, D.C.: US Army Center of Military History, 1998).

policy doctrine of containment of the 1950's framed the initial political context of the Vietnam War. However, beginning with President John F. Kennedy's administration in 1961, the distrust and ineffective relationship between Kennedy and his military advisors significantly complicated the development and execution of consistent and effective national policy regarding the application of military power. This collegial and non-hierarchical style of personnel management influenced Lyndon B. Johnson as he was dramatically thrust into the Presidency.[9] Lyndon B. Johnson's policy initiatives appeared to be developed solely based on political sensitivity and the national election cycle.[10] Combined with party politics and internal Washington political maneuvering, President Johnson's personality and leadership style affected advisor relationships regarding honest debate and countering positions on national Vietnam policy.[11] Due to personal and political insecurity, Lyndon Johnson did not tolerate dissent or even a difference of opinion among his advisors. This attitude prevailed throughout the administration especially if the issue affected national political perception. Ultimately, understanding of the operational environment was diluted and suppressed by channelized lines of communication and exclusive relationships.[12]

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[9] H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 1997). While not only an account of President Johnson during his term in office, McMaster provides the context of Johnson's rise to the Presidency.

[10] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 107.

[11] Kent B. Germany, "Historians and the many Lyndon Johnsons: A Review Essay." *The Journal of Southern History, 75*, 4, (2009), 1001-1028. Germany provides a summary of biographers, which depict Johnson's insecure personality and extreme need for validation through consensus.

[12] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 61. Besides the relationship between President Johnson and the JCS, other ineffective interpersonal relationships existed throughout the administration. A particularly strained relationship between Ambassador to Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge and the first MACV commander, General Paul D. Harkins led to General Harkins early removal and General Westmoreland's promotion.

Regardless of the other elements of national power, this administrative environment was ineffective for the consideration and then development of military strategy. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Maxwell Taylor utilized delaying tactics and circumvention to dilute and negate the JCS position; they also played on internal parochial divisions to purposely increase infighting and further dilute any JCS strength even though not in the national best interest.[13] The desire of each service chief to further their service's agenda hampered their collective ability to provide the best military advice. The JCS neutered their own value through parochial debate over aircraft systems and issues of service influence.[14] Through their own actions as well as through the manipulation of Taylor and McNamara, the JCS missed their opportunity to influence the formulation of the national policy concept for Vietnam. Thereafter, the Chiefs always found themselves in the difficult position of questioning a policy that the president had already approved.[15]

The JCS disagreed with McNamara's stance that South Vietnamese governmental stability was a prerequisite for attacking North Vietnam. Apart from comprehending the significance of the state of a host nation's government in the link to pacification efforts, the combined military experience of the JCS instinctively, professionally and logically led to the desire to use overwhelming US force to defeat the North Vietnamese. While still in an official advisory role in May 1964, attempts by Lodge, the JCS and even South Vietnamese generals to maintain "plausible deniability" regarding initial, covert offensive actions manifested frustration and general dissatisfaction throughout the Vietnam policy effort.[16] McNamara's intellectual

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[13] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 61.

[14] Ian Horwood, *Interservice Rivalry and Airpower in the Vietnam War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006).

[15] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 84.

[16] Ibid, 95-97. Although knowing the reality of the increased US military actions regarding Operation ROLLING THUNDER, McNamara helped the President's cause with

argument behind graduated pressure was vulnerable because it did not account for an accurate understanding of the enemy. General Westmoreland recognized that the ultimate North Vietnamese objective was the seizure of Saigon and that any alternative to an absolute defeat of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces would not alter the North Vietnam government's pursuit of that endstate.[17] From his perspective in Saigon, General Westmoreland asserted that with additional resources, the US military could stabilize the deterioration of South Vietnam and defeat North Vietnam.[18] Admiral Sharp also concluded that the air and naval programs were inhibited by restrictions growing out of the limited nature of the US conduct of the war.[19] Both Admiral Sharp's and General Westmoreland's understanding and visualization of the conduct of the war appeared contrary to McNamara's premise of graduated pressure.

The entire premise of graduated pressure rested on the principle of controlling, rather than planning, supporting and supervising, the entire US military escalation in Vietnam. McNamara, along with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, attempted to preserve control for the President by implementing restrictions on military force rather than reducing or removing limitations. Interference from Washington negatively affected Operation ROLLING THUNDER

Congress by claiming that, "US Soldiers are not engaged in combat except in the course of their training the Vietnamese. The bulk of the air effort by South Vietnamese and does involve exposing our men."

[17] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 143. Regarding the results of Operation ROLLING THUNDER, Westmoreland wrote, " . . . as I had expected, it had no apparent effect on the will of the North Vietnamese leaders to continue the fight. Graduated response simply would not work, particularly in the irresolute way Washington dictated that the campaign proceed."

[18] Ibid, 169. Westmoreland made his view clear to Washington that an enclave strategy was no answer. He intimated that the US should permit no more niceties about defensive posture and reaction and should forget about enclaves and take the war to the enemy.

[19] Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, 117; Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976). Clausewitz warned that to coerce the enemy the hardship of a situation must not be transient. Otherwise, the enemy would not give in, but wait for things to improve.

and rippled throughout operational and tactical level commands.[20] Although within his purview as the Secretary of Defense, this principle of action at the national level translated to precise and rigid oversight of the military at subordinate levels of command. Foundational issues of conflict between Johnson and the JCS recommendations as well as problems with the policy of graduated pressure were exemplified by the Viet Cong attack on Bien Hoa on 1 November 1964. Four US soldiers were killed and 57 wounded along with 17 B-57 bomber aircraft were damaged or destroyed. This attack was deliberately planned to disrupt a South Vietnam holiday and disrupt the US Presidential election only two days away. Military advisors from the JCS to Westmoreland viewed this as a clear escalation of hostilities, which required immediate military reprisal. However, sensitive to domestic political issues, President Johnson disregarded military advice and decided to forego retaliation.[21] Therefore, President Johnson's process of national policy development and implementation needlessly constrained subordinate military commanders from applying military force to meet the understood commanders intent.

President Johnson's predilection for domestic political concerns rather than US national security shaped how he viewed the Vietnam problem. Considering the scale and complexity of the problem in Vietnam and enormity of resources required for full combat action, MACV was severely limited in pursuing the given national objectives if the President's Vietnam policy was secondary to and predicated on domestic political needs. President Johnson only made decisions that publically exhibited the politically prudent qualities of outward restraint or national

[20] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 143. Westmoreland recalled, "Washington had to approve all targets in North Vietnam, and even though the Joint Chiefs submitted long-range programs, the State Department constantly interfered with individual missions"; Ibid, 408. Responding to criticism by Arthur Schlesinger, Westmoreland defended himself by emphasizing the military limitations. "Professor Schlesinger was just as wrong in deducing that the war of attrition was my choice of military strategy. [He] should have been aware of the tight civilian control exercised at the top level, of President Johnson's repeated public assurances that he would sanction no widening of the territory over which the war was fought."

[21] McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 175.

determination and resolve depending on the advantageous position at the given time.[22] Once President Johnson authorized escalation of combat forces, MACV and the field force headquarters could not plan effectively if McNamara, and ultimately Johnson, demanded detailed control from a national level.

The principle elements of graduated pressure were consistent with the backgrounds and experience of those who became the architects for American intervention in Vietnam. Prior to the military escalation, key civilians served as the real Vietnam policy planners and the JCS only supplied technical information in support of raids and targeting. Confusion mounted as JCS discussions of actual military objectives faded. The JCS failed to challenge the assumption that the North Vietnamese enemy would respond rationally to pressure and that those stimulii could be controlled from Washington. Even with the momentum created from tactical success once military force was applied, the individual corps headquarters could never achieve progress toward endstate criteria without national policy objectives consistent with military capacity. A JCS memo recommended a menu of actions or even courses of action, but not an entire comprehensive policy linking military strategy to national policy endstate criteria.

The civilian advisors planned and viewed Vietnam as a political operation and did not account for military consequences. President Johnson's administration planned for failure because they were only attempting to control increasing pressure on the adversary, rather than force a complete submission of the enemy will. General Westmoreland recognized this attitude when McNamara wanted to know the total number of American troops required to convince the enemy he would be unable to win, as opposed the number required to defeat the enemy.[23] While the overall desire for consensus within the administration precluded a full examination of

[22] Ibid, 108. McMaster concluded that LBJ really wanted only the credibility lent by the uniforms of the JCS rather than their advice and opinions.

[23] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 171.

contrasting options through discourse, no true agreement on the national objectives or level of military commitment was achieved. President Johnson's administration accepted the possibility that the US might not achieve its national policy objectives, and began to plan simply not to destroy US credibility in the process.

Strategy Defined

Students, scholars and professionals must view the actions of the policy makers as well as the military commanders responsible for the escalation of force in Vietnam against a commonly agreed upon doctrine. By evaluating historical actions against current understanding, it is feasible to establish the context to understand the escalation of Vietnam utilizing the doctrinal terms strategy and operational art.[24] Within the concept of Unified Action, Unified Land Operations (ULO) serves as the US Army's contemporary warfighting doctrine. ULO conceptually links the Army to entities representing the other elements of national power. The Department of Defense defines strategy as the integration of all of the elements of national power in a synchronized fashion toward the achievement of national objectives.[25] Synchronization is one of the six tenants of ULO. Because of the scale and scope of the contemporary campaigns and operations as demonstrated by the escalation in Vietnam, synchronization necessitates the employment of operational art. Operational art is the contemporary doctrinal concept that applies synchronization to bridge national policy to military strategy and tactics. Understanding operational art today, as well as analyzing the operational synchronization of Field Force Vietnam headquarters in Vietnam, requires a nuanced and balanced grasp of the comparison of contemporary and historical military doctrine. JP 3-0, Joint Operations, formally defines

[24] Mike Brennan, Justin Kelly, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy* (Carlisle, PA, Strategic Studies Institute, 2009). Through analysis of the proper doctrinal context of campaigns and operations, Brennan and Kelly argue for the relevancy of operational art as a part of the conduct of war in place of the historical meaning of strategy.

[25] Department of Defense, JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010).

operational art as the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways and means.[26] The military professional must utilize theory, history and doctrine to produce an optimal integration of the ends, ways and means, which offers the best utility. Theory provides the concepts for relating or viewing ideas across a spectrum. History furnishes situational context. Doctrine contributes the common language and particular principles through which to utilize theory and history to translate strategic objectives to tactical actions. Understanding operational art first requires an understanding of the definition of strategy.

Current doctrine, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) and Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, defines operational art as the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space and purpose.[27] Therefore, to understand operational art it is necessary to understand the meaning of strategy. A refined understanding of strategy is a necessary compliment to theory, history, and doctrine in framing a more accurate definition and application of operational art. The modern use of the term strategy differs from a classical understanding of strategy. In "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," Hew Strachan posits that senior leaders lost sight of the definition or understanding of the term strategy during the Cold War.[28] Strachan argues for a classic definition of strategy and describes the historical context of the iterative evolution of the term. The classic definition of strategy applies to a violent conflict where significant consequences such as death are a reality. Although strategy may be broadly defined or applied in other contexts, within the military and the civil-military relationship an understanding of the evolution is imperative regarding the

[26] Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011).

[27] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1.

[28] Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," *Survival*, 47 (Autumn 2005).

application in the relation of policy, strategy and operational art.[29] The vacuum created by the politicizing of strategy in a peacetime era necessitated the inclusion of operational art by military commanders to link tactics to military strategy instead of national policy.[30] In an address at Duke University, General Martin Dempsey stated that strategy is about context and choices.[31] Those choices have consequences, and consequences then produce new context. Therefore, change occurs because new context increases the complex interaction of multiple variables, which results in new problems. Solutions to changing problems require adaptation to account for the new variables. Operational art, however, is more then a direct implementation of doctrine as an agent of adaptation. General Dempsey claimed the practice of operational art is the framing of doctrine by leaders who can take the facts of the situation, apply context, understand and adapt.[32] However, thinking about operational art residing only at the operational level of war is dangerous because isolated military strategy can diverge significantly from intended foreign policy as demonstrated with the escalation of force in Vietnam. Therefore, while operational art supports a distinct separation between policy and military strategy, it also depicts the constant tension existing between the two on a continuum. The application of operational art discerns the method of the employment and utilization of resources to achieve the strategic military objectives.

The concept of operational art is founded on the precept of continuous change in the conduct of war. Clausewitz wrote that war is derived from the foundational psychological factors of fear, courage and ambition and is the result of human interaction.[33] Therefore, by nature of the vital human dimension, war is immeasurable, unpredictable and filled with uncertainty.

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[29] Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy".

[30] Ibid.

[31] General Martin Dempsey, Address at Duke University, January 2012, available at: http://www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?id=1673.

[32] Dempsey, Address at Duke University.

[33] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., 122.

Uncertainty demands that leaders adapt to changing circumstances to ensure continued success for military organizations. Successful military leaders effectively apply operational art by combining a thorough understanding of theory with a clear knowledge of military doctrine established in the appropriate strategic and historical context.

Theory translates complex ideas into understandable and applicable concepts. These concepts serve as a reference point that allows planners to prepare anticipated options. Although various theories and theorists exist, the tenants of scientific theory of war support an understanding of operational art. Paul Reynolds, a lead scientific theorist, defines the tenants of scientific theory as abstractness, intersubjectivity and empirical relevance.[34] Although Clausewitz maintains that war as a whole is immeasurable, the standards of abstractness, intersubjectivity and usefulness capably apply to operational art. In Shimon Naveh's *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, the former Israeli Defense Force General describes operational maneuver as an interactive system.[35] He argues that operational maneuver demands a combination of fire and movement at different levels and in various magnitudes.[36] Although large maneuver forces are not applicable to every conflict, an operational commander must account for the primary assets in space and time whether in a limited or irregular war. This application of the theory of interactive systems demonstrates the relevance of the standards of abstractness, intersubjectivity and usefulness in understanding operational art. In *The Scientific Way of Warfare*, Antoine Bousquet, presents a theory of bringing order to the chaos of military problems and unpredictable combat through a lens of metaphor.[37] Applying this theory, the operational artist must be aware

[34] Paul D. Reynolds, *A Primer in Theory Construction* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007), 12.

[35] Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence, The Evolution of Operational Theory* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997), 21.

[36] Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence, The Evolution of Operational Theory*, 21.

[37] Antoine Bousquet, *The Scientific Way of Warfare* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009).

of the contemporary discourse versus the reality of the actual conditions and elements on the battlefield. These examples demonstrate how a broad awareness of theory of war and warfare is necessary for a thorough understanding of operational art.

An equally critical element in the understanding of operational art is a broad knowledge of history. In a *Landscape of History*, John Gaddis, a noted Cold War historian, presents history as a method of achieving understanding by looking backward and forward.[38] A historical narrative offers a contextual view of the evolution of operational art from the Napoleonic Era strategic and tactical commander of a single, decisive force to many leaders controlling multiple forces over a long period. An analysis of the escalation of conflict in Vietnam through the lens of contemporary doctrine of operational art presents a contentious narrative in which national policy did not support MACV's operational level understanding and resulted in strategic failure. This analysis also demonstrates the necessity for clear understanding and application of contemporary operational art doctrine to ensure success in future conflicts.

A detailed and accurate understanding of military doctrine is the third element in understanding operational art. Within the joint doctrine cognitive construct of end, ways and means, operational art is the method of defining the ways, or concepts, which serve to connect the ends, or strategic objectives, to the means, or tactical resources. Combined with effective theoretical templates and appropriate contextual history, utilization of doctrine enables a military commander or leader to overcome the ambiguity and intricacies of a complex, ever changing, and uncertain operational environment to better understand the problem.[39] Applying operational art, an operational leader attempts to implement strategy through arranging tactics in time, space and purpose to achieve the desired end-state of the strategy through the means available.[40] The

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[38] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[39] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*.

[40] Dempsey, Address at Duke University.

operational artist must confront the issue of options, and given the means available, ask how can the force develop other methods to deliver on the objectives.[41] Understanding and utilization of doctrine facilitates that communication and assists in translating the commanders' operational approach into tactical actions.

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

Analysis of the terms strategy and operational art determined that operational art links tactical actions to military strategy and then military strategy to national policy. Although national policy makers never provided achievable military objectives, from 1965 through 1967, MACV commanders and staff effectively synchronized tactical actions within military strategic objectives during the escalation of conflict in Vietnam. The US Army, however, did not formally define the synchronization between strategic objectives and tactical action as operational art until the 1986 publication of the keystone doctrinal field manual, FM 100-5, *Operations*. Today's current doctrine, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) and Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, further defines operational art as the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space and purpose.[42] Three fundamental tools of contemporary doctrine –- operational variables, tenets of Unified Land Operations, and elements of operational design — reveal MACV's operational synchronization in linking the arrangement of tactical actions with strategic objectives. An analysis of the escalation of conflict in Vietnam through the lens of contemporary operations doctrine crystallizes the MACV operational level misunderstanding, which ultimately resulted in strategic failure. This analysis also demonstrates the necessity for clear understanding and application of current operational art doctrine to ensure success in future conflicts.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0.

Key leaders throughout an organization must possess a shared understanding of purpose as the foundation for the successful application of operational art. Commanders and staffs create this shared understanding through the mental process of analyzing and describing the environment using operational variables.[43] The operational variables consist of eight interrelated factors, which are fundamental to developing a comprehensive understanding of a complex environment.[44] The complex environment that existed during the escalation of conflict in Vietnam highlighted the significance of three of the operational variables: political, military and social.

The political variable describes the distribution of responsibility and power at all levels of governance.[45] Although the US political leadership continued to commit forces to the conflict, an overarching purpose did not drive these strategic decisions. While US President Lyndon B. Johnson maintained unquestioned responsibility for the decisions to increase forces in 1964, he edged into escalation only one step at a time.[46] Therefore, the US national leadership remained uncommitted to a method of obtaining the strategic objective of a negotiated peace between North and South Vietnam. The inconsistency of this national policy left the military leadership of the MACV unbalanced and uncertain as to its role in the arrangement of tactical forces in space and time. General Bruce Palmer, a MACV Deputy Commander, viewed clear strategic guidance as the government's responsibility "to see that the ends and means are kept in balance—that the strategic objectives under the strategic concept adopted are achievable with the

[43] Department of Defense, ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2012).

[44] Department of Defense, ADRP 5-0, *The Operations Process*.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 157.

forces and other resources expected to be available."[47] Although complex United States domestic and foreign policy issues dominated the political landscape, leaders within the senior government never developed clear, consistent national policy in which to synchronize broad military action. Whether or not national leaders thought they possessed an achievable policy, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Secretary of Defense McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff violated Clausewitz's command that no one should start a war without first being clear what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.[48]

A misunderstanding of the US and South and North Vietnam political operational variables adversely affected the military and social operational variables as well. This misunderstanding proved costly regarding the precise identification and prediction of enemy military activity. Graham Cosmas concluded that the MACV staff was slow to acknowledge the major change in the relative balance of power in 1964 and 1965 as indicated by the increased Viet Cong violent activity.[49] The MACV underestimation of the Viet Cong and North Vietnam military capability exacerbated the misidentification of the social operational variable regarding the Hanoi government. Overconfident US leaders mistakenly assumed the will of the North Vietnamese people as similar to their own. The senior political and MACV leaders incorrectly estimated that once North Vietnamese casualties escalated, the people, and therefore, the government would culminate. However, US leaders failed to accurately assess the vast commitment of national will power and resource expenditures of the North Vietnamese. Although US forces were deployed throughout South Vietnam, as indicated in Figure 1, the MACV's incorrect understanding of the social operational variable degraded their ability to

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[47] David Jablonsky, "Strategy and the Operational Level of War: Part I," *Parameters*, (Spring 1987), 65-76.

[48] Clausewitz, *On War*, 579.

[49] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 195.

effectively isolate the battlefield from Viet Cong insurgents as well North Vietnamese reinforcements. The deterioration of the relationship between General Harkins, the first MACV commander, and Henry Cabot Lodge, the US Ambassador to South Vietnam, further confused a common understanding of the political, military and social operational variables. In 1963, US Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara reported, "Lodge has virtually no contact with Harkins."[50] This absence of a coherent vision and understanding of the three critical operational variables by US leaders critically damaged the MACV synchronization of tactical actions because a shared understanding of purpose never materialized.

The six tenets of Unified Land Operations are a second fundamental tool of contemporary doctrine, which describe the Army's approach to generating and applying combat power in campaigns and major operations.[51] Flexibility, integration, lethality, adaptability, depth, and synchronization comprise the six tenets. An examination of flexibility and depth specifically illustrate the failure of the MACV commanders and staff to achieve operational synchronization. ADRP 3-0 states commanders seek to demonstrate flexibility in spite of adversity.[52] Although General William C. Westmoreland, the second MACV commander, established a positive relationship with the US Ambassador, he encountered significant adversity because of his lack of understanding of the operational variables. General Westmoreland attempted to compensate for his lack of operational understanding through the initiative of offensive action. Although many Soldiers exemplified personal initiative, the MACV leaders wasted opportunities to seize operational initiative. General Westmoreland and his staff did not anticipate events such as the enemy's offensive initiative and establishment of long lines of communication. Therefore, the MACV squandered opportunities to operate flexibly inside the enemy's decision cycle or react

[50] Ibid, 122.

[51] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0, 2-12.

[52] Ibid.

promptly to deteriorating situations.[53] Continued assessment failures also resulted in a lack of depth. Depth is the extension of operations in time, space, or purpose to achieve definitive results.[54] The continuous and desynchronized MACV requests for forces demonstrated the lack of depth achieved throughout South Vietnam. As depicted in Figure 1, US and coalition forces were deployed throughout the entire country of South Vietnam. MACV, however, hesitated to achieve operational depth because of its inability to strike the North Vietnamese throughout their deep echelon of units and disrupt the enemy decision cycle.[55] The 1970 Cambodian Campaign by US forces intended to resolve the lack of operational flexibility and depth by attacking the well established North Vietnamese lines of communications and resupply bases outside of South Vietnam. However, the offensive action proved too late to fatally disrupt Hanoi's decision cycle and further emphasized the MACV failure to apply synchronized flexibility and depth in their employment of forces.

The elements of operational design comprise the third tool of contemporary doctrine useful in the application of operational art. ADRP 3-0 states that the elements of operational design help the joint force commander and staff visualize and describe the commanders operational approach.[56] Military end state is an element of operational design that establishes the desired future conditions the commander wants to exist at the conclusion of an operation.[57] Because the MACV leadership poorly assessed the operational environment regarding the political, military and social operational variables, the specific elements of operational design do not prove as useful. Muddled and cloudy perspectives of the current situation detract from the

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

potential clarity that a clear military end state can provide. At the beginning of 1965, Ambassador Maxwell Taylor reflected the lack of a clear military end state by stating, "We are presently on a losing track and must risk a change."[58] Due to President Johnson's hesitation in committing to his strategic objectives, the MACV military end state resulted in disconnected tactical actions rather than coherent maneuvering of forces to accomplish a strategic result. The escalation of forces in Vietnam validated Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity in that the conduct of

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Figure 1. Major US and Allied Forces in South Vietnam, 1966.

Source: Cosmas, The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967, 235.

war proved subordinate to policy. In the escalation of Vietnam, Clauswitz's theory explains the desynchronization of the US and the MACV leaders, while also explaining the success of North Vietnam. All three aspects of the trinity interact like magnetized forces when placed next to each other.[59] However, while all three forces pushed and pulled against each other, one force, political and government policy, demonstrated a greater influence over the others.

Operational reach and culmination are two other elements of operational design. When compared between the MACV and North Vietnamese, a stark contrast in application exits. MACV's support of South Vietnamese army units significantly increased the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's distance and duration across which it employed its capabilities. However, due to the political considerations and sensitive relations with Cambodia and Loas, the MACV failed to account for the operational reach of the North Vietnamese. Lacking a common understanding and purpose with political leadership, General Westmoreland adopted a protracted struggle of attrition at the operational level.[60]

Key Leaders

To further analyze MACV's applied operational synchronization, it is critical to understand the operational approach of the commanders. As defined in ADRP 3-0, the operational approach is the description of the broad actions the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state.[61] General Westmoreland's experience as an

[59] Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

[60] Jablonsky, "Strategy and the Operational Level of War: Part I."

[61] Department of Defense, ADRP 3-0.

artillery battalion commander in World War II and then as a regimental combat team commander in the Korean War shaped his operational approach during the escalation in Vietnam. Reputed as skilled in the understanding of counterinsurgency warfare as well as civilian-military relations, General Westmoreland potentially stood as just the right leader to repair MACV relations with the US national leadership.[62] However, he never faced the intense scrutiny and distractions of continuous media coverage during his previous war-time commands. His reaction to this new battlefield condition concerning the information operational variable affected not only the tactical plan, but also the strategic effort of the war. The way General Westmoreland saw the escalation of forces, his operational approach, exacerbated by negative media coverage, effectively translated the varied strategic goals into coherent tactical actions. He adequately developed an operational approach to bridge the current conditions he faced in Vietnam with the end state conditions he envisioned. This contextual analysis illuminates the considerable influence of the joint force commander, along with commanders at all echelons, on the successful or unsuccessful employment of operational art.

As US tactical unit deployments increased through 1967 and beyond, the three field force commanders controlled almost all American ground forces in Vietnam.[63] Further analysis of operational synchronization between 1965 and 1967 requires an understanding of the field force commanders. LTG Stanley R. Larsen served as the first commander of I FFV from March 1966 to July 1967. As an infantry heavy weapons company commander and then a field grade regimental commander in the 25th Infantry Division during World War II, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for courage and bravery under fire in the Pacific theater. LTG Larsen subsequently commanded the Army Training Center and 8th Infantry Division; however, it

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[62] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 123.

[63] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 13.

was his significant time as an aide-de-camp along with his numerous jobs as Chief of Staff of high-level headquarters, which further prepared him to excel as I FFV commander in the central highlands of Vietnam.

LTG William B. Rosson succeeded LTG Larsen as I FFV Commander in July 1967. LTG Rosson served with distinction in World War II earning the Distinguished Service Cross at Anzio in Italy. He also fought in North Africa and extensively throughout the European Theater. He gained further experience serving in General Eisenhower's NATO Headquarters after World War II and then supported French Forces in Vietnam in 1954. This exposure and understanding of Southeast Asia proved invaluable as the incoming MACV Chief of Staff in 1965. Before assuming command of I FFV, General Westmoreland appointed LTG Rosson to develop and initially command a provisional division force called Task Force Oregon to confront enemy border threats in the I Corps tactical zone.

MACV established II FFV in March 1966 with MG Jonathan O. Seaman as the first commander. As a field artillery field grade officer, MG Seaman served in both European and Pacific Theaters in World War II. He commanded 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas as the first Army combat unit deployed to Vietnam. Within a year of arriving in theater, MG Seaman was promoted to the command of II FFV.

LTG Frederick C. Weyand succeeded MG Seaman as II FFV Commander in May 1967. LTG Weyand's career began as an intelligence officer with assignments in Burma, India and then in World War II, to the Allied Headquarters in the China Theater. He added to his experience in East Asia as a division deputy chief of staff in Korea. As an infantry battalion commander in the Korean War, he led his unit through five battle campaigns.[64] Broadening his perspective, LTG Weyand served as the deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel to Army Chief of Staff, General

[64] Publication of II Field Force Vietnam - The Hurricane, Number One, November 1967, Don Duffy Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/items.php?item=23280101007 (accessed 19 March 2013).

Johnson. LTG Weyand clearly understood the need for multiple leaders to command during the Vietnam War. While still working at the Pentagon he stated, "The long range needs of the Army and the nation require maximum utilization of this opportunity to give as many of our GO's as possible the actual counter-insurgency combat experience they can acquire only in RVN."[65] He was rewarded with his chance to command in Vietnam after deploying in December 1965 as the commander of the 25th Infantry Division until assuming command of II FFV in 1967.

III MAF was the equivalent Field Force headquarters to command MACV forces in the I Corps tactical zone. LTG Lewis W. Walt commanded III MAF from June 1965 to May of 1967. He had significant command experience as a company and battalion commander in the Pacific Theater in World War II, and as a regimental commander and division Chief of Staff during the Korean War. LTG Walt twice earned the Navy Cross for gallant actions on the battlefield in the Pacific. As the III MAF Commander, he was also the 3rd Marine Division Commander, Chief of Naval Forces and Senior Advisor to I Corps.

MACV Command and Control

General Westmoreland and the field force commanders confronted many obstacles in achieving effective command and control throughout the Corps tactical zones. First, terrain and the geographic distances between command locations proved challenging. Second, command and support relationships, not only between MACV and the South Vietnamese military, but also between US forces and allied nations, required clarification. Third, command and support relationships between the individual US services also required further development and refinement.

The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) divided South Vietnam into four Corps tactical zones from north to south. As depicted in Figure 2, I CTZ comprised the northernmost

[65] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967,* 271.

zone of South Vietnam. The zone consisted of five provinces with the country of Loas bordering to the west, North Vietnam to the north, and the South China Sea along the eastern coast. I CTZ contained a key airfield in the eastern coastal city of Da Nang as well as the important cultural city of Hue. The demilitarized zone dividing North and South Vietnam was a critical area that necessitated constant monitoring and control to ensure tactical awareness was maintained. Directly to the south, II CTZ consisted of 12 provinces that included the key port city of Cam Ranh. II CTZ was bordered on the west by Cambodia and a small section of Laos, and on the east by the South China Sea. Within II CTZ, diverse internal terrain proved tactically and operationally significant. The northern half of the II CTZ was important due to the highlands, which when confronted, proved a dire obstacle to effective, up tempo movement of military ground forces. Finally, the III CTZ, while smaller in area, was the most densely populated due to the capital city of Saigon. III CTZ consisted of ten provinces bordered by Cambodia to the west and the South China Sea to the east. Sections of Cambodia were no more than 50 kilometers away from Saigon, which increased the complexity of securing and defending key villages from the Viet Cong.[66] The southernmost zone of South Vietnam was IV CTZ. This zone was not assigned a field force headquarters since there was decreased enemy threat to US forces.[67] However, this zone possessed tactical and operational significance because of prevailing the Mekong Delta terrain feature. As advantageous terrain, MACV wanted to deny the Viet Cong access to the Mekong Delta transportation waterways. The division of terrain, and ultimately the

[66] Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam, Period Ending 31 October 1966. LTG Seaman directed II FFV to conduct a wargame in October 1966, which divulged the vulnerability of the town of Loc Ninh from a Viet Cong infiltration. VC units exhibited increased operational reach due to the proximity of VC basing within Cambodia; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 220. General Westmoreland continually requested permission as early as April 1966 for approval of cross border operations. He stated, "For long all we could do to the enemy in Cambodia was drop propaganda leaflets on our side of the border whenever the wind was right to blow them across."

[67] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 188. General Westmoreland acknowledges that he did not contemplate a major American deployment in the Mekong Delta and, therefore, did not align a comparable headquarters to serve with the Vietnamese IV Corps.

assigning of responsibility for actions within designated, represented prevalent tension in the rapid escalation of American force in South Vietnam. It is important to note that the Johnson administration ensured that the escalation remained only within South Vietnam. While as an independent factor, these strict boundaries were not detrimental and clearly made political sense. However, as LTG Larsen recognized during a media interaction while on a trip to Washington DC, these boundaries were detrimental to military operations attempting to achieve the national political objectives from President Johnson.[68]

To overcome the geographic challenges impeding unity of effort, General Westmoreland published campaign plans, attempted monthly visits to subordinate Corps and Division headquarters, and hosted periodic centralized MACV commander conferences. Through the MACV headquarters, he consistently issued guidance in the form of annual and bi-annual campaign plans and other memorandums to ensure a clear commander's intent was commonly understood.[69] To confirm that his guidance was received and his commander's intent executed, General Westmoreland preferred face to face meetings with his FFV commanders. However, due to the significant distances from Saigon, Westmoreland typically visited each headquarters himself rather than demand commanders travel to MACV Headquarters. This method of communication also enabled him to maintain a personal feel for battlefield conditions and employ a confirmation brief technique observed in World War II. He had the field force or division commander send him a message summarizing the results of the most recent interaction.[70] Since the field force headquarters staff and overall allocation of combat units in CTZs I – III were growing in 1966, General Westmoreland's command style intentionally remained focused on

[68] Ibid, 221. In 1966, when asked by the media why Secretary McNamara disagreed with his conclusion that the enemy was using Cambodia for basing and sustainment networks, LTG Larsen smiled and said, "I stand corrected."

[69] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 331.

[70] Ibid.

lower level operational synchronization. General Westmoreland also placed considerable importance on developing a shared vision and a cohesive approach. He hosted quarterly commanders' conferences near Saigon for all of the component commanders and the FFV commanders. The conferences instigated necessary interaction between the field force commanders that otherwise would not have occurred due to the consuming nature of the mission within each CTZ.

In 1964, MACV assumed all of the roles and duties of the former Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam (MAAG), which had been the lead agency for support to the South Vietnamese government and military since 1955.[71] Therefore, even with the increase of American and allied combat units, MACV retained all advisory and support responsibilities along with impending combat operations with ARVN forces. General Westmoreland believed that the most effective operational synchronization between US, allied and ARVN forces could be achieved through a combined allied command structure. However, the South Vietnamese strongly resisted any actions resembling French colonialism during the First Indochina War and, therefore, rejected a combined command structure. Within his first comprehensive concept of operations for US forces in Vietnam, General Westmoreland stated the US and ARVN relationship would be one of coordination and cooperation in the mutual self-interest of both commands.[72] The Joint General Staff was ARVN's highest planning staff and the MACV

[71] George S. Eckhardt, Major General, "Vietnam Studies, Command and Control, 1950-1969," (Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 1974); Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967;* Commander In Chief Pacific, Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Report on the War in Vietnam"; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*. General Westmoreland viewed the MAAG as an obstacle to unity of command and that, as a separate headquarters, it interfered with, rather than supported, the most effective path to achieving the political objectives. After a reduction in roles, the MAAG Headquarters worked in parallel to MACV until it was completely absorbed by MACV in 1964.

[72] Commander In Chief Pacific, Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Report on the War in Vietnam"; Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967,* 215.

equivalent. As depicted in Figure 3, the dashed line connecting the Joint General Staff to MACV, while abandoning unity of command, still promotes unity of effort. General James L. Collins served on the Joint General Staff as General Westmoreland's personal representative to assert

Figure 2. South Vietnam provinces within CTZs I-IV.

Source: MacGarrigle, The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967.

This was a consequence of the 1946 dissolution of the MAAG and a weakness in the operational synchronization of MACV forces as combat units continued to increase. General Bruce Palmer described MACV's synchronization with the South Vietnamese as, "lack of cohesiveness, a lack of overall direction and control, a lack of supervision, and a lack of coordination."[73] While an accurate representation of the situation, Palmer's critique is not the sole fault of MACV.

Beginning in 1965, MACV's focus turned to impending combat operations against enemy main forces and bases. Prioritization of termination criteria or a clear endstate was never delivered from national level agencies of the JCS, DOD or the President. As field force commanders arrived in theater and gained an initial understanding of their environment, their visualization of the space and mission not only included defeating the enemy, but was also clouded by the management of army advisory teams and serving as the senior advisor to their counterpart Vietnamese corps commander.[74] The tension between the continuing national policy objective of a negotiated peace with North Vietnam and the escalation of forces for combat operations demonstrated challenges with not clarifying the line between peace and war. Although the field force commanders simply gained an additional task, as a newly developing combat command headquarters they were not set-up to execute both tasks effectively. The Army component command, US Army, Vietnam (USARV) ultimately acquired more responsibility for the logistics of the advisory program. This solution somewhat streamlined MACV's responsibilities; however, added another superior headquarters in the command and control architecture.

Another factor in MACV's extensive span of control was the integration of allied forces. In 1965, deployed allied forces in Vietnam were named the Free World Military Forces (FWMF).

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[73] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*.

[74] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 288; Senior Officer Debriefing Report, LTG Stanley R. Larsen: I Field Force Vietnam, 01 August 1965 – 31 July 1967.

Most commonly consisting of South Korean, Australian, New Zealand, Thais and Filipino forces, the FWMF participated in a policy council to establish the appropriate command relationship between the FWMF, the US and the South Vietnamese. The majority of nations agreed to place their forces under operational control (OPCON) of General Westmoreland and then subsequently a tactical field force commander. While the command relationship term of OPCON formally defined the relationship, all of the allied/US relationships required negotiation and requests for action due to political sensitivities rather than indiscriminate direct orders.

The South Koreans, however, were an exception as they rejected any semblance of formal American operational control.[75] Since South Korean participation was founded, as all nations, on the realist motive of self-interest, the South Koreans demanded independence and co-equal status. As depicted in Figure 1, the main contingent of Republic of Korean (ROK) units primarily controlled the populated coastal region of II CTZ. Publicly, this manifested as requests by LTG Larsen to the ROK forces; however, privately, the ROK Commander, Major General Chae, cooperated with the orders given by the field force commanders. The cooperation did not come without some initial jockeying for position. LTG Larsen initially communicated with the ROK forces through the ROK liaisons on the I FFV staff. However, General Chae insisted that all communication initiate from the US through his Republic of Korea Force, Vietnam (ROKFORV) headquarters.[76] Although continued diplomacy and cultural sensitivities were practiced and upheld, MACV and the field forces ultimately achieved unity of effort with the ROK and other allied forces.

As the commander for the geographic unified command of Pacific Command (PACOM), Admiral Ulysses S. Grant Sharp oversaw the escalation of force of all US service components in

[75] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 345; Stanley R. Larsen and James L. Collins, Jr, *Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1973).

[76] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 345.

South Vietnam. However, even though there were other major operations being conducted in the countries surrounding South Vietnam, President Johnson and the Department of Defense hesitated to install an overall command for the theater of Southeast Asia. The Johnson administration, instead, designated the escalation of force in South Vietnam as a campaign and General Westmoreland as a sub-unified commander of MACV. While there were competing political and US interservice rivalry components throughout the regional theater, General Westmoreland adopted a parallel command structure to manage the expansive span of control within South Vietnam. As depicted in Figure 3, MACV headquarters established relationships parallel to the Pacific service components of the Army, Navy and Air Force. While frustrating and overly bureaucratic at times, the parallel command structure highlighted Westmoreland's diplomatic and personal character strengths as he developed and maintained cordial and productive relationships with interservice commanders.

The growth of the MACV sub-unified command along with the increase in multi-service forces did not occur without obstacles. All service components, just like allied nations, even though loyal to the national cause, acted in accordance with their self-interests. General Westmoreland's biggest interservice challenge was with III MAF. Westmoreland detected a tendency for the marine chain of command to attempt to unduly influence the tactical conduct of the III MAF, which was under his control.[77] This attitude also pertained to the III MAF and I FFV commanders. Due to poor personal relations between LTG Larsen and LTG Walt, I FFV and III MAF had repeated difficulty in coordinating operations along their mutual boundary.[78] However, even with interservice tensions based on pride, tradition and resources, MACV

[77] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 333; Lewis W. Walt, "Gift of Personal Statement by General Lewis M. Walt to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library" (General Services Administration National Archives and Records Service, 1974).

[78] Walt, "Gift of Personal Statement by General Lewis M. Walt to the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library".

achieved unity of effort. A marine, General Chaisson, who served as both the III MAF G3 as well as the MACV chief of the Combat Operations Center declared, "there wasn't really a rat's ass worth of difference between the major things that the marines . . . were doing and the things that the Army was doing."[79]

A second significant interservice challenge resulting from a parallel command structure was the issue of command and control of airpower. The practice of centralized air command and control as developed since World War II was generally regarded as the most effective method. However, since there was no overall air component commander established for the Southeast Asia theater, General Westmoreland demanded air support responsive to ground operations in CTZs I - III.[80] Admiral Sharp, however, staunchly retained control of air assets for OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER.[81] Air operations in Cambodia and Laos were also in competition for sorties. Seventh Air Force was the designated provider of all of the Air Force resources for the Pacific Air Force, and the personal relationship between the commander, MG Joseph Moore, and General Westmoreland enabled successful synchronization.[82]

The third interservice command and control challenge was the role of the Army component. As a US Army officer, General Westmoreland and the MACV staff assumed almost all army operational and logistical responsibilities. Since no overall theater commander was designated, MACV predominately acted as the headquarters for a joint force command as well as the army component command. This identity was formalized in 1963 when General

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[79] Cosmas, *The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, 404.

[80] Ian Horwood, *Interservice Rivalry and Airpower in the Vietnam War*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006).

[81] Commander In Chief Pacific, Commander US Military Assistance Command Vietnam, "Report on the War in Vietnam."

[82] Joseph H. Moore, US Air Force Oral History Interview Lt Gen Joseph H. Moore. (Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Air University, Office of Air Force History, Headquarters, USAF, 1969); Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports.*

Westmoreland assumed the Army component command as an additional duty.[83] However, as combat forces increased and the logistic requirements compounded with the multiple roles such as entire Army advisory effort, the responsibilities overwhelmed the MACV staff. The solution to support MACV and clarify responsibilities was the formal redesignation of the US Army Support Command, initially under MACV, as US Army, Vietnam. General Westmoreland, though, did not relinquish official command of USARV. He argued against a fundamental redistribution of responsibilities claiming such perspective lacked understanding of the situation and the nature of the operations.[84] Ultimately, as depicted in the command relationship structure in Figure 3, a formal separation between the tactical and logistical commands resulted forcing the field force headquarters to answer to two separate commands.

Operations

Even with the existence of much oversight and control, MACV did not possess a defined plan to facilitate the escalation of combat forces beginning in 1965. Based on directives and vague guidance from McNamara and Admiral Sharp, General Westmoreland took the initiative and guided the MACV staff in developing a military strategy to support the South Vietnamese while simultaneously defeating the North Vietnamese Army. As part of developing the military strategy, he requested the military forces he thought were required to successfully accomplish the plan. The development of a military strategy is the exact task of the operational level commander. However, it was significantly more difficult because General Westmoreland was constrained by unclear national policy objectives without defined termination criteria. President Johnson and his administration did not decide on a clear transition from a policy of

[83] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 315.

[84] Ibid, 318.

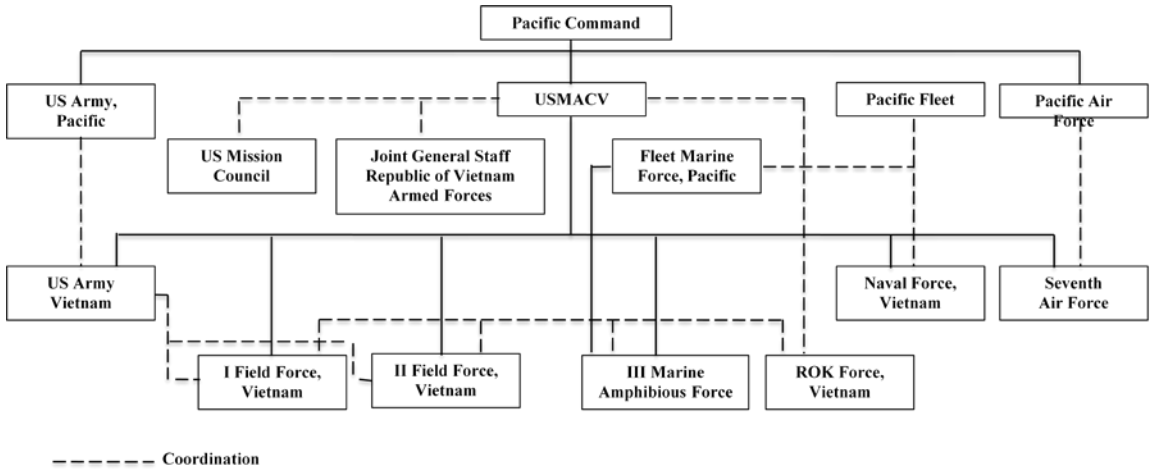

Figure 3. MACV Command Relationships, 1967.

Source: Cosmas, The US Army in Vietnam: MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967, 319.

peace in the form of an advisory mission in support of the South Vietnamese to a policy of war with the dramatic increase of combat forces. The national political endstate of a negotiated settlement with North Korea complicated the development of an effective military strategy. Military forces were not the optimal instrument of national power to achieve a negotiated settlement against North Korea. However, without a change to the political endstate, General Westmoreland developed the most comprehensive military strategy possible.

With President Johnson emphasizing the mandate to continue to advise and support the South Vietnamese people at the 1966 Honolulu conference, General Westmoreland established pacification as a primary line of effort (LOE). The military task within pacification is to secure the people. Against the Viet Cong and main forces of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), securing the people entailed seeking out and destroying enemy main force units and bases. General Westmoreland recognized offensive actions as ultimately a battle of attrition with the North Vietnamese. Therefore, offensive actions became the second LOE. A third LOE developed due the significant threat posed by PAVN forces along the demilitarized zone

bordering I CTZ. Due to the specific nature of this threat, General Westmoreland categorized the third LOE as containment of the DMZ forces.

The MACV military strategy attempted to link attrition and pacification together as the national policy makers envisioned. However, General Westmoreland recognized that military forces provide security; only the South Vietnamese could execute and ensure pacification. While faced with an ineffective link between the national government and the operational military headquarters, MACV successfully achieved synchronization throughout South Vietnam. MACV established operational objectives, provided an allocation of maneuver units and logistical support as displayed in Figure 3, and established geographic based priorities for the pacification and security LOEs. General Westmoreland communicated this guidance during a frequent visit to II FFV headquarters by emphasizing the primary combat mission to seek out and destroy the enemy wherever he was found. Westmoreland exhorted his field force commanders to take the initiative and do not ever let the enemy get back his balance. The synchronization of the military strategy at the Corps level is demonstrated through four key tactical operations.

Operation STARLITE

Operation STARLITE was a four-day regimental operation conducted by III MAF in August 1965, which saw the first defeat of a Viet Cong main force. This was the first major US offensive operation conducted after the arrival of increased combat units. The marines, employing a combined arms approach, utilized ground, air and sea assets to encircle two battalions of a Viet Cong regiment south of Chu Lai in the I CTZ. III MAF inflicted 700 casualties while losing 45 marines and wounding 203. Although combined arms maneuver with supporting fires represented fundamental marine doctrine, this type of synchronized action to include an amphibious landing, naval gunfire support, helicopter insertions, and air force close air support had yet to be demonstrated in the South Vietnam escalation of force. LTG Walt developed a phased and sequenced plan that required synchronized actions from three service

components. MACV assessed Operation STARLITE as a dominant victory based on the number of enemy casualties and the immediate effect against the 1st Viet Cong (VC) Regiment. However, using completely inaccurate facts, and the since the 1st VC Regiment was not destroyed completely, the Viet Cong also claimed victory themselves. Although partly a self-defense against his critics when publishing his memoir, General Westmoreland described Operation STARLITE as an auspicious beginning for American arms.[85] While an overwhelming tactical success, Operation STARLITE was an early indication of the challenge resulting from ambiguous national termination criteria and endstate. III MAF achieved military strategic objectives through successful execution of a synchronized plan. Therefore, this operational success should have contributed to achieving the national political endstate of a negotiated peace with North Korea. Instead, Operation STARLITE illuminated the disparity between a clear military strategy and an unclear and incongruent national political endstate.

Operation MASHER / WHITE WING

As the build-up of combat forces continued into 1966, each field force commander became increasingly familiar with their designated area of operation. General Westmoreland understood that two eastern provinces that bordered the South China Sea were critical in controlling the central and northern highlands of the II CTZ. Although Phu Yen Province contained the principal granary for the enemy in the II CTZ, as the gateway to the Central Highlands, MACV recognized Binh Dinh Province as the key to securing both II CTZ and

[85] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 189. Westmoreland further stated, "from this beginning until American withdrawal some seven and a half years later no American unit in South Vietnam other than a few companies on the offensive or an occasional small outpost ever incurred what could fairly be called a setback. That is a remarkable record."; Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*. Summers developed the same conclusion in his analysis of the war eight years after Westmoreland published his memoir.

southern I CTZ.[86] Due to increased enemy intelligence, General Westmoreland instructed LTG Larsen to initially focus on the 12th PAVN Regiment, one of three infantry regiments of the 3rd PAVN Division within Binh Dinh Province.[87] MACV reinforced the commander's intent to search out and destroy the enemy by naming the operation MASHER. However, because President Johnson was extremely sensitive to American public perception and negative reaction in the US he requested the operation name changed to a neutral image. Therefore, and with a touch of irony, MACV renamed the operation WHITE WING.[88] The close supervision by the President's administration did not necessarily demonstrate a lack of trust in General Westmoreland. However, confusion between national policy and military strategy resulted from an unclear national policy endstate and determined termination criteria. This precipitated a general lack of certainty and trust throughout the administration and theater command, which ultimately affected the field force commanders.

To achieve success against the 3rd PAVN Division, LTG Larsen considered three factors: terrain, phasing, and allied support. Highway 1 ran north and south through the Bong Son Plain and represented the major line of communication to the southern I CTZ. Whichever force maintained control of this critical terrain depended on who controlled the overlooking highlands to the west. The interlocking ridges of the mountains created hideouts for enemy units or housed enemy command, control and logistical centers.[89] This terrain, as evidenced by previous

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[86] Carland, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966*, 201; Southeast Asia Report, Operation Masher & White Wing. Pacific Air Forces, Hickam AFB, 1966.

[87] Carland, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966*; Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam, Period Ending 31 October 1966.

[88] Carland, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966*, 203.

[89] Carland, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966*, 202; Senior Officer Debriefing Report, LTG Stanley R. Larsen: I Field Force Vietnam, 01 August 1965 – 31 July 1967.

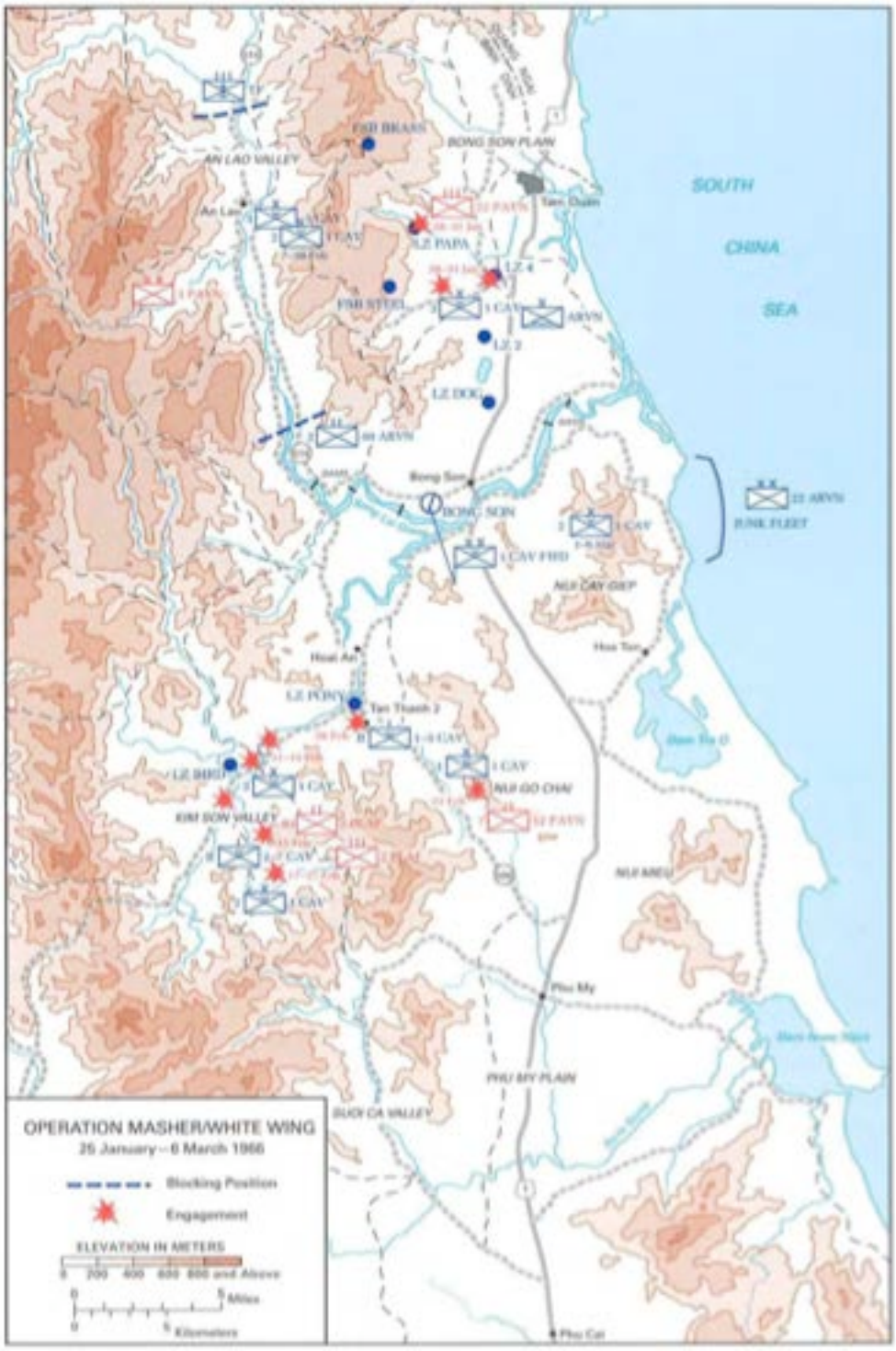

Figure 4. Operation MASHER / WHITE WING.

Source: Carland, The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Stemming the Tide May 1965 to October 1966, 205.

operations in 1965, necessitated reliable close air support for visibility and fire support. However, the I FFV and MACV staff realized the risk of unreliable close air support due to the regional monsoon weather.

The risk of maneuver elements without close air support led to sequential phasing of the operation. As depicted in Figure 4, the mountain highlands and the Lai Giang River naturally divided the region. This enabled a natural sequential phasing of the operation into four parts based on the two prominent valleys north of the river and the two highland areas south of the river. I FFV achieved tactical success in each phase of the operation totally over a month of sustained synchronized combat. The ARVN forces along with Marines from the III MAF significantly contributed the success. Marines crossed the northern II CTZ boundary for the first time to seal the northern exits of the An Loa Valley, while the South Vietnamese executed the same blocking positions at the south end. The ARVN also established blocking positions along Highway 1. The South Korean forces also supported the operation by providing airfield security as well as local search and destroy missions. The application of I FFV forces combat power against prudent enemy intelligence and influenced by several variables demonstrated a synchronized plan in time, space and with a specific purpose.

Operation ATTLEBORO

As demonstrated in Operation MASHER / WHITE WING, terrain and weather proved to be a dominant variable in MACV's synchronization of field force operations. Because of the wet and stormy winter, General Westmoreland intended to wait until the spring of 1967 for the next main offensive. However, the North Vietnamese government with their military forces aimed at the objective of Saigon did not intend to wait. As has been consistently recognized in historical accounts as well as understood by the II FFV staff, the terrain in the III CTZ from outside of Saigon to the Cambodian border favored combat operations as it offered gently rolling hills

combined with flat, jungled plains.[90] III CTZ also represented prime territory for combat operations not only because it included Saigon, but also because of the logistical pipelines running from the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville.[91] This tactical target for MACV proved especially challenging because of the political sensitivities regarding the US relationship with Cambodia and the constraints against any offensive operations across the Cambodian border. To account for the considerable threat, General Westmoreland allocated two divisions and two separate brigades under MG Seaman and II FFV. Combined with the US forces were three ARVN divisions and a brigade size allied Australian and New Zealand Task Force.

Operation ATTLEBORO initially began in mid-September 1966 as a series of battalion sized probes in the III CTZ northwest province of Tay Ninh. Attempting to seize the initiative after the discovery of enemy caches, the operation expanded at the end of October to a brigade operation led by BG Edward de Saussure of the 196th Infantry Brigade. Resulting from reactionary national policy in response to the actions of North Vietnam, the II FFV accepted greater risk with a rapid increase of combat units. The quick integration of reinforcing units inadequately affected the tempo of operations in relation to enemy activity. The 196th Brigade experienced this increased tempo during the initial four days of Operation ATTLEBORO. Although an enemy battalion was effectively destroyed, the 196th Brigade planned complicated maneuvers, which only served to separate lower echelon units and compounded many tactical problems. The initial phase of the operation signified the first time the North Vietnamese fought in sustained combat in the III CTZ.[92]

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[90] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 31; Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam, Period Ending 31 October 1966.

[91] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*; Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 221. General Westmoreland recorded his frustration due to political limitations on the MACV military strategy.

[92] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 44.

MG William DePuy, the 1st Infantry Division Commander, took over command of Operation ATTLEBORO as it increased in scope to become a large-scale search and destroy operation. While various maneuver tactics were employed at different echelons and in different situations, II FFV, along with I FFV and III MAF possessed no alternative concepts to search and destroy the enemy based on the best available intelligence. Ultimately, this was not because of a lack of creativity or poor leadership, but due to the dichotomy between the national policy of negotiated peace and the MACV military strategy within South Vietnam. However, as characterized in Operation ATTLEBORO, the major headquarters synchronized tactical actions in space, time and purpose. The role of the Air Force increased sharply as the operation expanded.[93]

On 7 November, MG Weyand, temporarily serving as II FFV acting commander, raised the status of Operation ATTLEBORO to a field force operation with the inclusion of 25th Infantry Division. The synchronized actions of both divisions exposed a huge enemy supply complex and severely affected the capacity of the 9th Division of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). Based on the enemy situation, General Westmoreland and MG Weyand determined the options for the final phase of Operation ATTLEBORO. MG Weyand directed the 1st Infantry Division to return to their original area of operations north of Saigon upon completion of searching west of the Saigon River.[94] As arrayed in Figure 5, MG Weyand then presented the 25th Infantry Division with successive options. First, the division was to maneuver north with an objective of locating and attacking the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) headquarters.

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[93] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 47; Moore, US Air Force Oral History Interview Lt Gen Joseph H. Moore; John Schlight, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia: The War In South Vietnam, the Years of the Offensive, 1965-1968* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1999).

[94] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 53; Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division, Period Ending 30 April 1967, http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/AD0388163 (accessed 12 April 2013).

If COSVN proved elusive, the 25th Infantry Division was to attack a suspected major supply base in Lo Go near the Cambodian border. Finally, if Lo Go did not produce results, MG Weyand would end Operation ATTLEBORO. Although many COSVN enemy forces escaped in the overnight attack, the maneuver resulted in the discovery and capture of a sizable Viet Cong medical center. As with most the operations during the escalation of MACV combat units in South Vietnam, US and allied force casualties were dramatically less by at least half than the PAVN or Viet Cong.

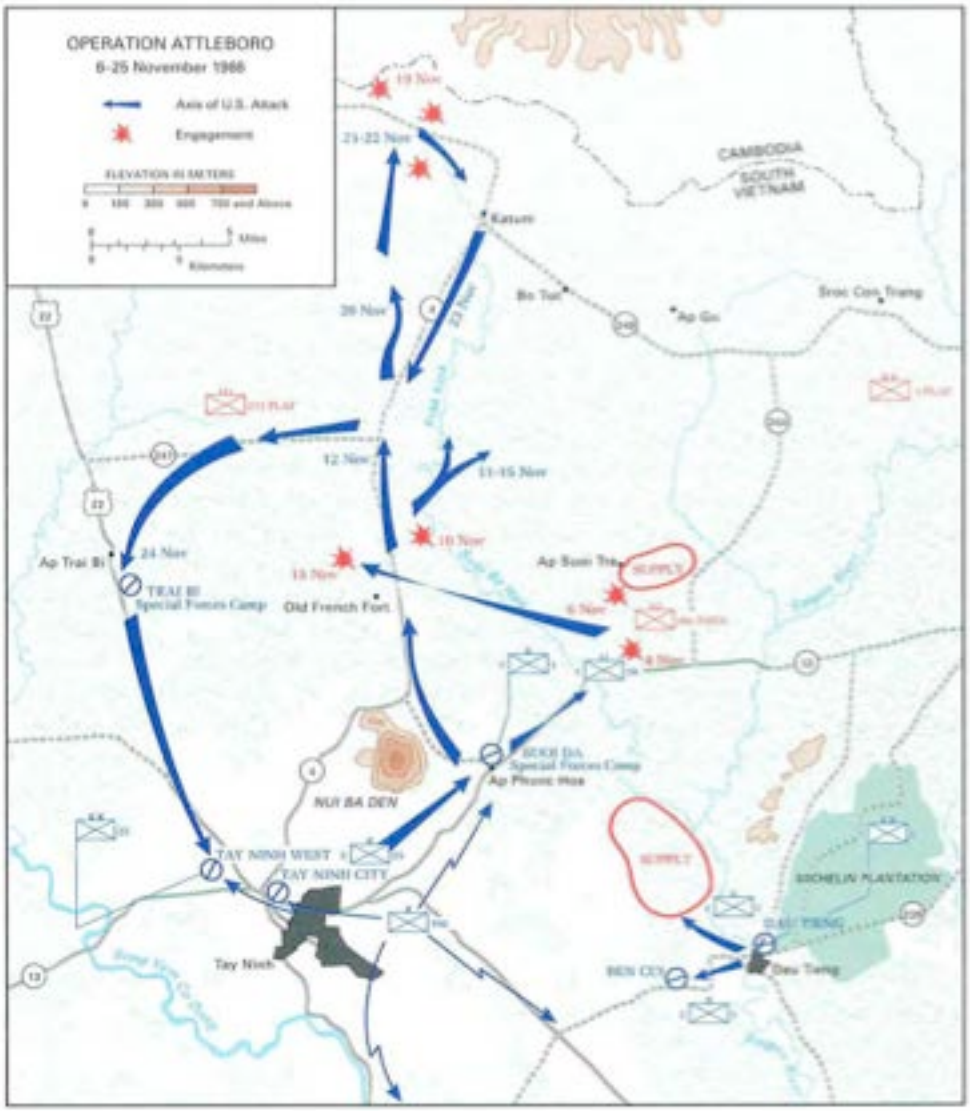

Figure 5. Operation ATTLEBORO.

Source: MacGarrigle, The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967, 49.

The key factors that ensured success in Operation ATTLEBORO were the incredible application of effective logistics in not only maintaining the basic classes of supply, but in transporting units and headquarters to and from multiple areas. The second critical factor was the immense amount of indirect fire support and close air support employed in support of maneuver forces. The 9th PLAF Division along with the other enemy elements possessed no defense for such superiority in each engagement. Although Operation ATTLEBORO was such an overwhelming and significant MACV victory, in the end it only delayed future attacks in the III CTZ and ultimately on Saigon. The operation itself did not help to connect the military strategy to the political endstate. Within the disconnected concept, MG DePuy was an advocate of the main force war, while MG Weyand advocated for an equal or greater balance on supporting the pacification effort. General Westmoreland stipulated both tasks in his campaign plan; however, the results highlight the friction when national level policy makers direct operational level tasks.

Operation JUNCTION CITY

The results of Operation ATTLEBORO and the successive Operation CEDAR FALLS only reinforced General Westmoreland's intent to conduct a large scale offensive in early 1967 to pursue the enemy and push them out of South Vietnam. He wanted to disrupt any enemy interdiction plans and provide MACV forces with enough breathing room to begin pacifying the countryside.[95] This concept revealed MACV's long term plan of constructing new bases in War Zone C, allowing follow-on operations should the Communists attempt to return.[96] Unit AARs

[95] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 113; Verne L. Bowers and Bernard W. Rogers, *Vietnam Studies, Cedar Falls--Junction City: A Turning Point* (Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 1974).

[96] Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 1st Infantry Division, Period Ending 30 April 1967, http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/AD0388163 (accessed 12 April 2013);

from the participating division headquarters and General Westmoreland's memoir along with the seasoned historical assessments demonstrated the consistency and clarity in the established military objectives of Operation JUNCTION CITY. This consistent perspective across echelons of participants as well as over a twenty-year period suggest the degree of clarity as well as synchronization which existed among the commanders and units.

As MACV experienced in previous operations, several obstacles remained. The rugged terrain, the depth of reinforcing enemy units, and the ability of enemy forces to retreat to bases inside Cambodia where MACV forces were prevented from pursuing caused considerable opposition. Planned and executed as the largest allied operation in South Vietnam up to that point in 1967, MG Seaman conceded that even if he had doubled the number of forces, the COSVN still could have escaped undetected into Cambodia.[97] Such opposing obstacles required bold and assertive action. MG Seaman's field force plan incorporated the control of seven brigades, a series of deception operations, and the largest airborne assault since World War II's Operation MARKET GARDEN. The deception operations were planned to not direct enemy forces away, but to lead them in to the target area.[98] Additionally, the utilization of 249

Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 250; B.L. Crittenden, G.C. Lorenz, D.H. Petraeus, P.A. Stuart, J.H. Willbanks, Operation Junction City, Vietnam, 1967 (Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth, KS, Combat Studies Institute, 1983), http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA139612 (accessed on 12 April 2013); MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*. Each account consistently and clearly state the military objectives for Operation JUNCTION were to search and destroy the COSVN and 9th VC Division. Also, the following objectives were to build special forces base camps and cargo capable airfields for continued area access.

[97] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 142.

[98] B.L. Crittenden, G.C. Lorenz, D.H. Petraeus, P.A. Stuart, J.H. Willbanks, Operation Junction City, Vietnam, 1967; Verne L. Bowers and Bernard W. Rogers, "Vietnam Studies, Cedar Falls--Junction City: A Turning Point".

helicopters marked Operation JUNCTION CITY as the largest air assault in the history of US Army Aviation.[99] Due to the massive encirclement operation and the unit coordination

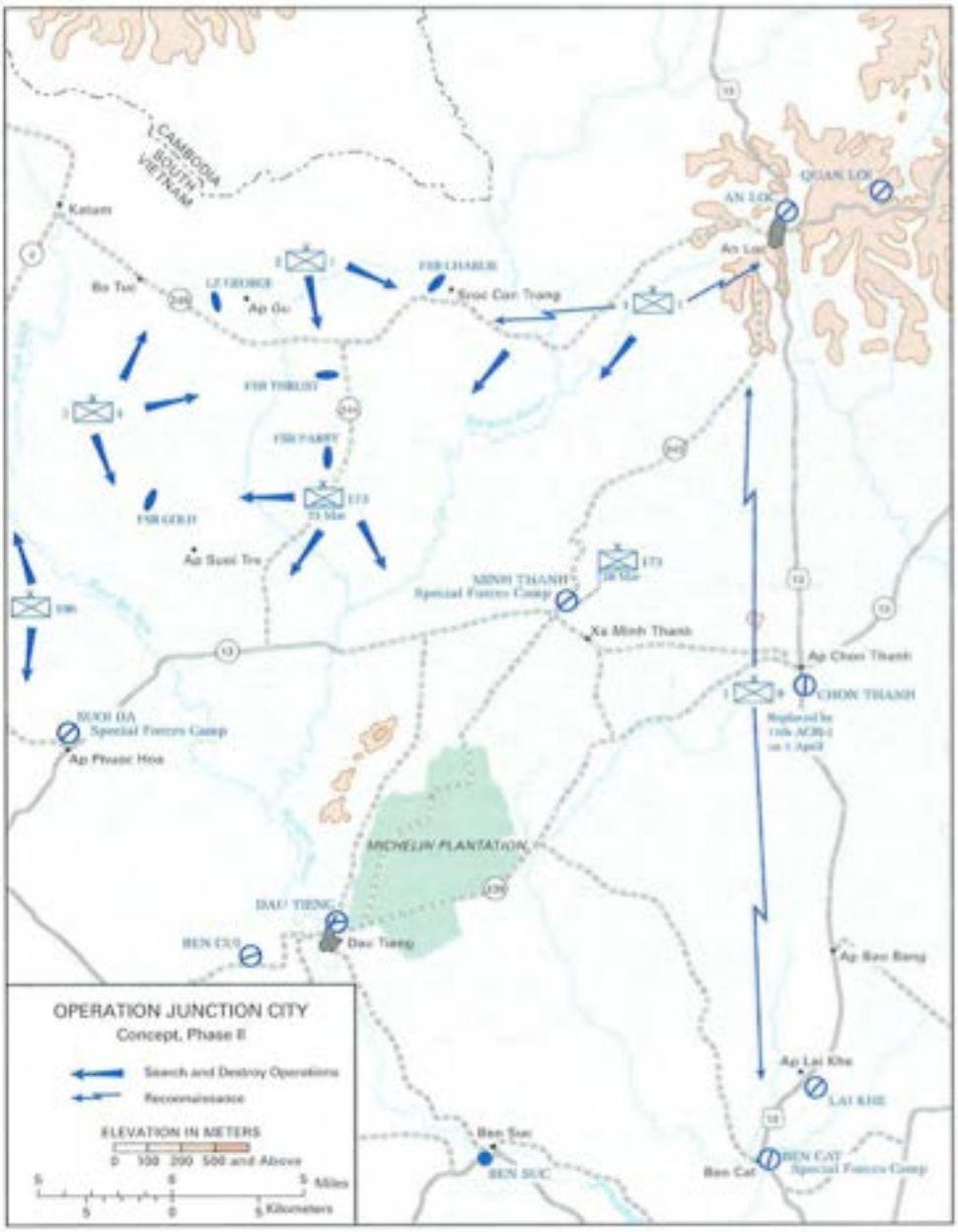

Figure 6. Operation JUNCTION CITY.

Source: MacGarrigle, The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967, 128.

[99] MacGarrigle, *The US Army in Vietnam: Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive October 1966 to October 1967*, 117.

management required, II FFV became the first US corps-level headquarters to take to the field in Vietnam to direct operations.[100] With all of the incorporated assets and moving pieces from various echelons of command as shown in Figure 6, commanders and staffs carefully managed the time and distance relationships of units on the ground, as well as soon realizing the significance of airspace management.

Ultimately, II FFV and MACV gained repeated access to a region previously used as the main location for the COSVN Headquarters. Enemy documents revealed that the operation forced the VC to relocate inside Cambodia and further away from the South Vietnamese population they were attempting to control.[101] While accomplishing the planned tactical objectives, Operation JUNCTION CITY also provided an example of operational synchronization within MACV. General Westmoreland realized that with a tactical defeat of the VC and the discovery of the COSVN headquarters, the larger gain was ensuring long-term regional access.[102] Cargo capable airfields were built to ensure regional re-entry and special forces units assisted in occupying strategic outposts. Due to operational synchronization, the II FFV along with the MACV staff anticipated and were prepared to provide housing for the special forces troops manning posts throughout the area for an expanded presence.[103]

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 250.

[102] Operational Report, Lessons Learned, Headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam, Period Ending 31 October 1967. Captured enemy documents revealed that General Westmoreland and MG Seaman's anticipation of increased VC attacks were correct. Operation JUNCTION CITY disrupted those enemy plans.

[103] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 250. General Westmoreland proudly recalled, "having anticipated the need for these camps, we had prefabricated component parts available for rapid installation."

CONCLUSION

The rapid escalation of force in South Vietnam is predominantly considered a failure of American policy and MACV military strategy. Conversely, it is viewed as a strategic success for the North Vietnamese. This dichotomy framed the tension and, therefore, the necessity of synchronization through the theory of the three magnets of Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity. All elements of Clausewitz's secondary trinity, the government, the military and the people, were represented during the escalation of combat forces between 1965 and 1967. The will of the American people, while not yet voicing collective dissent against US policy on Vietnam, profoundly affected President Johnson and the actions of his administration as he primarily pursued his domestic political agenda. The resultant national policy of a negotiated settlement with North Korea provided vague termination criteria for military combat operations. President Johnson never adequately defined the line between peace and war. General Westmoreland's military strategy was, therefore, disconnected from the intended national policy objectives, and ultimately what the American people were willing to accept.

Carl von Clausewitz argued that, "No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."[104] This precept crystallizes the importance of synchronization between all three variables of Clausewitz's trinity. As a theater commander, General Westmoreland successfully synchronized military actions among his three field force commanders in an environment constrained by time and resources. The vast research available on the rapid escalation of force between 1965 and 1967 demonstrates military actions were synchronized in time, space and purpose. This conclusion conforms to today's doctrinal definition of operational art. In his memoir, General Westmoreland explained his thought process in developing the field force organizational construct. He intended to provide flexibility essential

[104] Clausewitz, *On War*, 579.

for a long and complex commitment. He further noted that he, along with his field force commanders, intentionally accounted for as many operational variables as he could before making critical decisions.[105] Whether motivated by the threat of North Vietnamese forces near the DMZ or because of disagreements over III MAF's operations, the development and integration of Task Force Oregon, initially a division and then a corps level headquarters in the III CTZ, exemplified the flexibility and anticipation of all the operational level commanders and leaders within MACV.[106] However, planning and execution of military strategy only accounts for one of the variable elements of the trinity. Synchronization between governmental policy and military strategy is the other, and largely more important relationship in the trinity.

The operational understanding and leadership, which fostered the anticipation and tactical success, realized the absolute need for a military strategy to serve as an extension of national policy. However, none of the highest level US commanders in South Vietnam could ensure successful accomplishment of the desynchronized political objectives. Historically, the ground offensive and pacification actions within South Vietnam are considered a campaign, yet the synchronized actions did not accomplish the political endstate. Therefore, in reality, the actions in South Vietnam are a series of major operations. The confusion over terminology and the application of resources and appropriate command and control is not a failure of General Westmoreland or the MACV staff. To counter the uncertainties and complexities of Vietnam, the MACV staff attempted to synchronize all plans and actions between the three field force headquarters. These headquarters maintained jurisdiction over US and allied forces of different components and cultures all attempting to integrate with the South Vietnamese military and people. However, no alternative plans and tactical actions could compensate for the failure of the

[105] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 189.

[106] Ibid, 188.

US national government to provide clear policy objectives commensurate with the limitations within the military theater of operations.

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